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STAFF NOTES:

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Iraq

Foreign Relations

In offering his first impressions of Iraq, the new head of the US interest section in Baghdad has discerned little evidence of any imminent change in the Baathist regime's relations with the US. He believes, in fact, that there is little or no incentive for Baghdad to move toward a resumption of full diplomatic relations. The current arrangement permits Iraq to strike a "holier than thou" attitude with the Arab states that have resumed regular ties with Washington, while allowing Baghdad to enter into increased economic relations with US companies.

Saddam Husayn Tikriti, the Iraqi strongman, recently spiked the notion that increased economic ties with the West was a harbinger of a reorientation in Iraq's foreign policy. He told an Arab journalist earlier this month that Baghdad would use purely economic criteria in selecting foreign companies to carry out projects in Iraq, but that the amount of commercial relations with another country would have no bearing on the closeness of political ties.

Saddam Husayn declared that Baghdad was not and never would be in the "zone" of either the Soviet Union or the West. Iraq was, he said, in the "zone of Iraqi-Soviet friendly relations."

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Tanzania

Proposed Party Merger Divides Zanzibari Leaders

Leaders of largely autonomous Zanzibar appear to be divided over how to respond to Tanzanian President Nyerere's proposal last month for a merger of Zanzibar's Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) and the mainland's Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) headed by Nyerere. Early this month, the ASP executive committee postponed for six weeks its preparatory work for the party's triennial meeting, apparently because of differences between ASP leader Aboud Jumbe and other senior party officials over how to deal with Nyerere's proposal.

Jumbe went on record two years ago as being opposed to a merger of the two parties, and his initial reaction to Nyerere's proposal appeared to be lukewarm. For the last several weeks, however, he has been traveling throughout the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba apparently attempting to develop a consensus for the merger among local party and government officials. In taking this approach, Jumbe appears to be going over the heads of the other senior ASP leaders, who oppose any closer connection between the ASP and TANU for fear that it will lead to gradual curtailment of their power and prerogatives.

Jumbe's motives for reversing his position are not yet clear but may be related in part to his continuing effort to whittle down the power position of his rivals in the island's government. Apart from ensuring his own primacy Jumbe wants to streamline Zanzibar's government machinery and improve its performance. In the past he has placated his rivals by giving them important government posts with the result that Zanzibar now has an unwieldy structure of ministries, ad hoc committees, and other government bodies. The presence of numerous poorly educated and inept senior party leaders in many of these posts has hampered Jumbe's efforts to diversify the economy before the expected decline in proceeds from clove exports occurs.

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Jumbe probably considers himself adroit enough to avoid any diminution of his own authority on Zanzibar as a result of an ASP-TANU merger. He probably also calculates that his long-term objective of succeeding Nyerere as the head of the Tanzanian state would be enhanced by the merger.



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Bangladesh

Challenges to Mushtaque

An ambush of a security force unit by armed guerrillas and sharp criticism of President Mushtaque by members of the country's suspended parliament last week have caused some anxiety in official circles over the government's effectiveness and stability. The events by themselves do not constitute a serious threat to the regime, but they do point up a fundamental weakness that will impede its ability to cope with possible more serious challenges to its authority in the future and to accommodate the country's various political interests.

Since the coup last August, a band of guerrillas led by Qader Siddiqui, a die-hard supporter of the late president Mujib, has been operating in central Bangladesh. Early last week government forces attacked an island where the guerrillas were hiding.

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[REDACTED] the government unit fell into trap after suffering several casualties.

Bangladesh has always been troubled by armed, sometimes sizable guerrilla bands roaming the countryside. Mujib periodically attempted to round them up. After the recent ambush, the Mushtaque government moved additional troops to the area, presumably in preparation for a move to bring Siddiqui and his followers under control. The government's task may be made more difficult if, as the Dacca regime believes, India is giving aid and sanctuary to Siddiqui.

Several days after the ambush, some members of parliament, in a marathon session with Mushtaque, reportedly criticized the President for not taking the legislators into his confidence and pressed him

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to restore parliamentary democracy immediately. Some also complained of harrassment under the new regime and questioned whether the assassination of Mujib's family was necessary. Apparently there is not much the legislators can do effectively to oppose the President. Nonetheless, the incident indicates that Mushtaque may have difficulty in keeping political elements in line, especially if he goes through with plans to lift the ban on political activity next August in preparation for general elections in 1977.

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